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# THE SOUTHWESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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## MIRABEAU BUONAPARTE LAMAR\*

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### CHAPTER I

#### EARLY LIFE IN GEORGIA

When Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar arrived in Texas just before the battle of San Jacinto to cast in his fortunes with the new republic, he had already achieved some prominence in his native State of Georgia. He was born at Louisville, Warren County, in that State, on August 16, 1798, the second of a family of nine. The family from which he was descended, tradition says, being Huguenots, left France during the persecution of Protestants under Richelieu and settled in Maryland. On November 17, 1663, Lord Baltimore granted certificates of nationality to Thomas and Peter Lamore, and ten years later to John Lamore. Peter Lamar left a will dated in 1693. Thomas Lamar also left a will, dated October 4, 1712, leaving to his wife and two sons, Thomas and John, considerable estates in Prince George's County. The second Thomas also left a will, dated May 11, 1747, in which he distributed a large estate among his six sons and two sons-in-law. In 1755 three of these sons, Robert, Thomas, and John, and one of the sons-in-law, sold their estates and moved down into South Carolina and Georgia. The father of the subject of this paper

\*This life of President Lamar was undertaken by Mr. Christian while a graduate student at the University of Texas, and continued at the University of Pennsylvania, where it was accepted as the thesis for the Ph. D. degree. On account of the continued illness of Dr. Christian it is published without certain revisions which he expected to make.

was John Lamar, grandson of the John Lamar who settled in Georgia in 1755. He was born in 1769, and married his first cousin, Rebecca Lamar.<sup>1</sup>

To John and Rebecca Lamar were born four sons and five daughters. With the family lived Zachariah Lamar, a brother to John, an eccentric, self-taught man, who is supposed to have given to the sons their names. He afterwards married and his daughter became the wife of Howell Cobb, prominent in Georgia history. The eldest son, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, became a member of the Superior Court of Georgia in 1830, at the age of thirty-three. He was the father of L. Q. C. Lamar, who was a prominent Southern statesman before and after the Civil War, becoming Secretary of the Interior in President Cleveland's Cabinet, and later an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Other sons were Jefferson Jackson and Thomas Randolph.<sup>2</sup>

It is probable that Mirabeau availed himself of the opportunities offered by the schools in his locality, though he never went to college. "Though not a rich man," wrote Joel Crawford, a contemporary, and the law partner of L. Q. C., the elder, "Mr. John Lamar, by dint of industry and good management, found means to give his children the best education which the schools of the country afforded. None of them had the benefit of a college course, nor were they (it is believed) acquainted with the ancient classics or any other language but English."<sup>3</sup> A close application to the rules of good English is indicated in all his writings, though how much of this was due to training in school it is impossible to say. It seems, however, that he was chiefly self-taught, as in all his writings there is evident a lack of system which is likely to come with self-education. That he acquired a great mass of information is certain, and his native ability in expression caused him to be rated by his contemporaries much above his merit.

In 1819, at the age of twenty-one, he established a general merchandise business in Cahawba, Alabama. Being unsuccessful in this business, we find him in March, 1821, announcing his purpose to publish a humorous paper, "Village Miscellany to be writ-

<sup>1</sup>Edward Mayes, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar*, 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>3</sup>*Bench and Bar of Georgia*. Quoted by Edward Mayes, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar*, 16.

ten in a series of numbers by Lanthornbalvon.”<sup>4</sup> On January 1, 1822, he had printed a broadside in verse entitled, “New Year’s Address to the Patrons of the Cahawba Press.” When he became editor of this paper, if he did, does not appear. A few days later he sent a copy of this address to his brother in Georgia. In a note on the back of the broadside he wrote:

Dear Brother

I am here in Cahaba, without any business, or likelihood to obtain any, shortly— You need not be disappointed if you see me back in Geo. again in few weeks; in great haste

Yours &C.

M. B. Lamar.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time he explained that he had written the address “with a running quill,” and apologized for the errors. It seems probable that the verses were contributed by Lamar to the Cahawba Press, and that he had no official connection with the paper.

In 1823 George M. Troup became Governor of Georgia after a four years campaign, and Lamar acted as his private secretary during the stirring times of his administration. He was recommended for the appointment by Joel Crawford, law partner of his elder brother, as a “gentleman not more distinguished by the loftiest sentiments of honor, than by mental Superiority & devotion to republican politics.”<sup>6</sup> It was during this period that the struggle between Georgia and the Federal Government over the removal of the Creeks and Cherokees took place, and Lamar is credited with activity in raising the militia to resist the efforts of the Federal Government to coerce Georgia.<sup>7</sup> It was probably at this time that he conceived an enmity towards the Indians that went with him throughout his life. It was during this period, also, that he adopted the principles advocated by the extreme States’ Rights party.

On January 1, 1826, his term as secretary to the governor having expired, he married Miss Tabitha B. Jordan, of Perry, Alabama, and for the next two years lived in retirement on the farm. On January 1, 1828, he announced his purpose to publish a newspaper in the town of Columbus, “if sufficient patronage can be

<sup>4</sup>MSS., *Lamar Papers*, No. 34.

<sup>5</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 44.

<sup>6</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 50.

<sup>7</sup>Henry S. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 285.

obtained to warrant the undertaking." The *Columbus Enquirer*, he announced in the prospectus, was to be attached to "the Republican creed as exemplified in the administration of Thomas Jefferson; and in State politics, adhering to the principles that characterized the late able administration of Governor Troup, it will defend 'the Union of the States and the sovereignty of the States.'" Its influence in the ensuing presidential election was to be given to the democratic candidate most formidable to the men in office. "But it will not be wholly devoted to these matters," he stated. "A large portion of its columns will be filled with such miscellaneous selections as are calculated to please and to instruct;—to gratify fancy and to increase knowledge—making it a literary as well as a political paper." It was to be printed on a large sheet, with new type, once a week, at three dollars a year.<sup>8</sup>

He continued the publication of this paper alone until 1833. During that time he wrote editorials on the questions of the day. A number of them were in defence of the Troup administration. Others defended the Federal Government for the removal of the Indians west of the Mississippi, defended the doctrine of state rights, and discussed in a learned and heavy way various constitutional questions. There are also book reviews written by him. At the same time he was getting practice in public speaking by delivering addresses to various boys' and girls' schools.<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1833 Lamar became a candidate for Congress. It was the custom for the legislative caucus to nominate the candidates for Congress. The caucus met at Milledgeville and nominated the nine candidates, passing over Lamar, and appointed a committee of seven to fill any vacancies which might occur. There was a vacancy, but the committee of seven refused to endorse the candidacy of Lamar, and nominated another, making ten candidates for the nine seats. Under these conditions Lamar was defeated. During the campaign he came out in an address denouncing the caucus system, and stating that he would submit his candidacy to no seven men. He complained that the Troup party was not represented, and that there was hence inequality.

<sup>8</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 73.

<sup>9</sup>*Lamar Papers*, Nos. 69, 78, 79, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 102, 104.

"If my political bark cannot sail upon the sea of correct principles," he wrote in his bombastic style,

let it founder,—it shall never float upon the waves of triumphant error. . . . If my political course has been equivocal or treacherous—warm when honors were to be distributed, but cool if not bestowed on me—if I have either in public or private life been more cunning than candid, more selfish than serviceable, or more illiberal than just—if I have made Patriotism subordinate to a love of promotion; demanding much, but performing little, fattening upon offices, yet with cormorant appetite still asking for more, and threatening desertion if more is not given—in a word, if I have been one of those hollow-hearted politicians, who hold with the hare and run with hound, . . .

then, he did not deserve the office that he aspired to.<sup>10</sup>

After his defeat for Congress in 1833, Lamar became active in the organization and propagation of the States' Rights Party of Georgia. On November 13, 1833, a States' Rights meeting met at Milledgeville and adopted a preamble and resolutions. It denounced Jackson's proclamation in connection with nullification in South Carolina; adopted "the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions as triumphant in 1825, 6, 7," and denounced the Force Bill as a glaring infraction of States' rights. A few days later a prospectus announced a new series of the *Columbus Enquirer* to be edited by Mirabeau B. Lamar and William B. Tinsley in support of the principles of the States' Rights Party.<sup>11</sup> About the same time Lamar delivered an address upon the doctrines of the States' Rights and Union parties in Georgia. He stated that the union was a union of sovereign and independent States bound together by a written compact, and the general government is the agent of the States. He defended the right of nullifying an act of Congress as the agent has no power under the Constitution to coerce a State. "But if the agent, feeling might and forgetting right, shall attempt to enforce her mandates by military coercion, then the State thus menaced must determine for herself whether she will submit to the objectionable acts—meet force with force—or retire peacefully from the Union. Such I believe to be funda-

<sup>10</sup>Broadside, *Lamar Papers*, No. 168.

<sup>11</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 178.

mentally the doctrine of the Party with which I have the honor to act."<sup>12</sup>

He continued his connection with this paper until some time in 1834. The death of his wife in 1833, together with an impairment of his own health, and a naturally restless disposition, led him to sever his connection with the paper in 1834, temporarily, if not permanently. In January, 1835, we find him in Alabama on his way to Texas.<sup>13</sup> He arrived at Nacogdoches in July, and immediately proceeded to Coles's settlement, where he made known his intention to become a citizen of Texas. He paid Captain Horatio Chriesman a fee to run off a headright of land. He also announced in a public address, at Washington his intention to become a citizen of Texas, and said that he desired in the event "of a revolutionary struggle, to made *her* destiny *mine* for good or ill." It seems that these declarations were the result of a more or less sudden impulse. A biographical sketch, published in the *Nacogdoches Chronicle* in 1838 states that he came to Texas to collect material for a history of Texas.<sup>14</sup> This seems a likely reason for his trip as is indicated by the nature of his collections during that period.

From Washington he went to San Felipe, but he found the land office closed on account of threatened hostilities, and was unable to get a certificate for his headright. He was told by Stephen F. Austin that he could return to the United States to settle up his business there before emigrating, and sailed for Georgia in November, 1835. He arrived in Georgia late in the year, but almost immediately learned that there was danger of a serious war, and returned to Texas before he could attend to his affairs in Georgia,<sup>15</sup> arriving at Velasco in the latter part of March. During his brief stay in Georgia he had succeeded in interesting several men there in land speculation, and he brought back with him \$6,000 to invest for them in Texas land.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 177.

<sup>13</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 194.

<sup>14</sup>*Telegraph and Texas Register*, April 14, 1838; June 23, 1838.

<sup>15</sup>*Telegraph and Texas Register*, June, 23, 1838.

<sup>16</sup>M. B. Lamar to J. J. Lamar, April 10, 1838; *Lamar Papers*, 351.

## CHAPTER II

### AS A TEXAS REVOLUTIONIST, 1836-1838

When Lamar arrived in Texas in the latter part of March, 1836, the affairs of the Texas Revolutionists seemed well nigh hopeless. After a period of successes during November and December, 1835, their fortunes had undergone a change. In January, 1836, Santa Anna had begun the invasion of Texas with a force of six thousand men. On March 6, the Alamo fell, while the convention at Washington on the Brazos was declaring Texas independent, and framing a provisional government. The Goliad massacre had taken place on March 27, and the Texan army under General Houston had begun a retreat from Gonzales which took them to the San Jacinto battlefield. And not only the army, but the whole populace was in a panicky flight. The civil government under David G. Burnet had first fled from Washington to Harrisburg, and thence to Galveston Island. It was under these circumstances that Lamar joined the army just before the battle of San Jacinto.

On March 25, 1836, Alexander E. Patton of Velasco wrote to a man named Kilgore at Brazoria, asking that his horse, which Kilgore had been keeping, be turned over to "Mr. M. B. Lamar . . . just arrived on the Schooner Flash . . . anxious to visit the army."<sup>17</sup> Whether the horse was turned over to Lamar does not appear. One biographer states that Lamar walked from Velasco to Harrisburg in order to get there in time for the expected battle.<sup>18</sup> On April 10, he wrote his brother at Macon, Georgia, stating that he was expecting to go into battle, and giving directions as to the disposal of his effects in case of his death. "I shall reach Houston day after tomorrow, a distance from this place about 50 miles," he wrote.

In the event of my falling in Battle, you will find my trunks, papers, etc., in the possession of Mrs. Jane Long, who has temporarily fled from Brazoria to Boliver point at Galveston Bay. The money brought by me to be laid out in Lands, I have of course, in the present confused state of things, not been able to lay out. Govt. has no authority to sell lands, and from individuals no pur-

<sup>17</sup>Patton to Kilgore, March 25, 1836, in *Lamar Papers*, No. 348.

<sup>18</sup>Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, 581.



chase can yet be made with safety. I have therefore been much embarrassed to know what to do with so large a sum of money; it is dangerous to keep it about me, especially as I am going into Battle. After due consideration, I have placed it in the hands of Lorenzo Zavala, the vice-President of the Government, the most responsible and probably the most honest among them. . . .

My health at present is good. I feel much solicitude for my mother; If she was well and cheerful and could bear affliction with more fortitude, I should be happy— Tell Rebecca Ann that she must learn to write read and spell well, and that is the best education. . . .<sup>19</sup>

Some time between the date of this letter and April 20 he joined the army on the Brazos, as a private. On April 20, in a preliminary skirmish at San Jacinto, he rescued a comrade at the risk of his own life, and for this gallant conduct he was elected to the command of the cavalry.<sup>20</sup> On the following day he was in command of the cavalry, and was officially commended by the commander-in-chief, Sam Houston, and the Secretary of War, T. J. Rusk, who was present and took part in the battle. Houston in reporting the battle said:

Our cavalry, sixty-one in number, commanded by Colonel Mirabeau B. Lamar, whose gallant and daring conduct on the previous day had attracted the admiration of his comrades and called him to that station, placed on our right, completed our line. Our cavalry was first dispatched to the front of the enemy's left, for the purpose of attracting their notice, whilst an extensive island of timber afforded us an opportunity of concentrating our forces and deploying from that point, agreeably to the previous design of the troops. Every evolution was performed with alacrity, the whole advancing rapidly in line and through an open prairie, without any protection whatever for our men.<sup>21</sup>

The same sentiments were expressed by Rusk in his report to the President.<sup>22</sup>

As is well known, the battle of San Jacinto resulted in overwhelming victory for the Texans. Practically the whole Mexican

<sup>19</sup>M. B. Lamar to J. J. Lamar, April 10, 1836, *Lamar Papers*, No. 351.

<sup>20</sup>Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, 581; *Texas Almanac*, 1858, p. 110. Brown, *History of Texas*, II, 20.

<sup>21</sup>Brown, *History of Texas*, II, 20; Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 500. *Lamar Papers*, No. 355.

<sup>22</sup>Brown, *History of Texas*, 27; Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 504; *Lamar Papers*, No. 354.

army under Santa Anna was captured, including Santa Anna himself. On April 22, General Houston and Santa Anna entered into an armistice until a treaty of peace could be drawn up, and Santa Anna ordered his subsidiary forces to return to Bexar for further orders.<sup>23</sup> It was thought by General Houston, President Burnet, and a majority of the Cabinet, that an excellent opportunity presented itself while Santa Anna was in their power to form a treaty guaranteeing the independence of Texas. Lamar, who had become Secretary of War on May 5, in place of Rusk, who had assumed command of the army, and Potter, Secretary of the Navy, opposed any treaty with Santa Anna, and favored his execution for the crimes he had committed.

In his letter to the President and Cabinet on May 12, Lamar said that a majority of the Cabinet considered Santa Anna a prisoner of war, but he considered him a murderer. "A chieftain battling for what he conceives to be the rights of his country," he continued,

however mistaken in his views, may be privileged to make hot and vigorous war upon the foe; but, when in violation of all principles of civilized conflict, he avows and acts upon the revolting policy of extermination and rapine, slaying the surrendering and plundering whom he slays, he forfeits the commiseration of mankind by sinking the character of the hero into that of an abhorred murderer.

Some would assent to the justice of the sentence of death, but were willing to waive its execution for certain advantages which might flow to the country from a wise and judicious action. He asked what surety had they that any stipulations would be carried out.

What he assents to while a prisoner, he may reject when a free-man. Indeed, the idea of treating with a man in our power, who views freedom in acquiescence, and death in opposition, seems to me more worthy of ridicule than refutation.

He said that it was doubtful if Santa Anna would have the power to fulfill his engagements, even if he had the will to do so. He expected that as soon as the news of the defeat should reach Mexico, Santa Anna would lose all his authority, and would be powerless for good or ill.

<sup>23</sup>Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 150.

I am therefore decidedly opposed to all negotiation or arrangements with him;—first, because he is a prisoner and not free to act; secondly, because he is faithless and therefore unworthy of confidence; and thirdly, because of the great certainty of his inability to fulfill his promises even with the desire to do so.

He stated further that even if negotiations should be entered into and prove successful, he would regret the miscarriage of vengeance and justice. Finally, if any negotiations were undertaken, he thought arrangements should be made for transferring the prisoners in exchange for Texan prisoners in Mexico, holding Santa Anna till the end of the war.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of the opposition of Lamar, and the strong reasons given for retaining Santa Anna, the Cabinet entered into an agreement with him on May 14. By the public agreement, which was more in the nature of an armistice, Santa Anna agreed not to take up arms, nor use his influence to cause them to be taken up during the war for independence. He agreed on withdrawal from Texas, and an exchange of prisoners. The Texan authorities, on their part, agreed to send Santa Anna to Vera Cruz as soon as it should be judged proper. By the secret agreement entered into the same day, besides the points mentioned in the public agreement, he agreed to prepare the cabinet of Mexico to receive the mission which the government of Texas might send, so that "by negotiations all differences may be settled, and the independence that has been declared by the convention may be acknowledged." He agreed, further, that a treaty of commerce, amity, and limits between Mexico and Texas, should be established, the territory of Texas not to extend beyond the Rio Bravo del Norte. Texas agreed that "the present return of General Santa Anna to Vera Cruz being indispensable for the purpose of effecting his solemn engagements, the government of Texas will provide for his immediate embarkation for said port."<sup>25</sup>

The Government was on the point of sending Santa Anna to Vera Cruz in accordance with this agreement, when, on June 3, Thomas Jefferson Green arrived at Velasco with two hundred and thirty volunteers from New Orleans, and on account of their opposition prevented his release. At that time, and after, Lamar sup-

<sup>24</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 361; Brown, *History of Texas*, II, 56-60.

<sup>25</sup>Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 526-528; Brown, *History of Texas*, II, 62-64; *Lamar Papers*, Nos. 365, 366.

ported the civil against the military authorities, and joined with the President in resisting the demands of Green and his coadjutors for the execution of the prisoner.

General Houston had been severely wounded in the battle of San Jacinto, and found it necessary to go to New Orleans for treatment. Consequently, he surrendered the command of the army, May 5, 1836, to Brigadier-General Rusk, who had resigned as Secretary of War. The army under Rusk followed the retreating Mexicans as far as Goliad, where they collected and buried the bones of Fannin and his men, and then established headquarters at Victoria.<sup>26</sup> Here they were joined by volunteers from the United States, increasing the army to about twenty-three hundred by July 1.<sup>27</sup> Among these volunteers were Green, who had prevented the sending of Santa Anna to Vera Cruz, Felix Huston, and others who felt themselves specially fitted to command the army. The army undoubtedly fell into a state of mutiny. Each of the leaders of volunteers was intriguing for the chief command. Some of the soldiers held that Sam Houston was still in command though absent, and refused to obey the orders of Rusk. It was under these circumstances that Rusk appealed to the President and Cabinet to appoint a commander-in-chief of the army. Acting on this request the President and Cabinet, on June 25, appointed Lamar, who had resigned as Secretary of War a few days before, to be Major-General and Commander-in-Chief of the army.

It was not until July 14 that Lamar arrived at the camp. In the meantime he had been at Brazoria making preparations for supplies for the army, and preparing to resist the invasion which seemed threatening. He had received numerous letters of congratulation, and was unprepared to learn when he reached Victoria on the 13th that there was considerable opposition to accepting him as commander-in-chief. When he arrived at the headquarters of the army at Guadalupe the following day, he was met by a committee which had been appointed previously, and requested not to assume authority as commander-in-chief until the subject could be more fully considered by the officers.

Felix Huston, who had arrived in camp on July 4, according to his account, was one of the leaders in the refusal to receive Lamar,

<sup>26</sup>Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 177.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 183.

though he pretended to be acting only as an agent for the others.<sup>28</sup> At a meeting of the officers shortly after he arrived in camp, Huston said, all present were willing to acknowledge the merits of Lamar, but that they denied the power of the Cabinet to supersede General Houston and they would not consent to the destruction of General Rusk. He suggested the appointment of a committee to meet General Lamar and acquaint him with the desires of the officers. The committee was appointed, and resolutions drawn up as follows:

*Resolved*, That this meeting highly appreciate the gallantry and worth of General Lamar, and will be at all times ready to receive him with the cordiality and respect due to his personal and military acquirements.

*Resolved*, That Colonel B. F. Smith and Colonel H. Millard be appointed a committee to wait on General Lamar, and tender him the respects of this meeting, and inform him that, there being some question of the propriety of his appointment by the President as major-general of the Texan army, by which he is directed to assume the chief command of the army, he is requested by the officers present not to act in his official capacity of major-general until the subject may be more maturely considered by the meeting of the officers of the army.<sup>29</sup>

Lamar, unwilling to accept the statement of the officers as to the resistance to his assumption of command, determined to address the army. In his speech he dwelt on his service in the battle of San Jacinto. Since then he had been on the point of returning to the United States when news came that the Mexicans were preparing to invade Texas again, and he immediately made his plans to join the army. He was not anxious to lead the army if they did not want him, but would cheerfully take his place in the ranks. After he had spoken Rusk, Green, and Huston spoke, and then the army voted. This resulted in only 179 votes for Lamar, and probably 1500 against him, most of the opponents being in favor of General Sam Houston. Lamar, in his report to President Burnet, July 17, said:

<sup>28</sup>Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 185. Yoakum makes the mistake of accepting unquestioningly Huston's version of this event. The main facts related are essentially correct, but it takes no cognizance of the intrigues of Green and Huston for the chief command, and the desire of Rusk to retain it, largely influenced by them.

<sup>29</sup>Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 184, note.

Everything is in the utmost confusion and rebellion. On my arrival I was informed that I could not be recognized as Commander in Chief. I proposed to speak to the soldiers, and did so, but was answered by Rusk, Green, and Felix Houston, who carried the popular current against me. I had an open rupture with Genl Rusk, believing it to be the secret arrangements of his to supplant me. Some hostile correspondence ensued; which instead of leading to further difficulty, has resulted in this arrangement, viz, that he is to recognize my orders in the future; that the regulars and about 6 or 8 volunteer companies are to march to another encampment under my command; where I shall issue my orders as Commander in Chief to the balance of the army of Texas, and if Green and Felix Houston still maintain their present attitude of rebellion to my authority, I shall punish them by Court Martial if possible, and if not shall report them to Congress. You will perceive from this dreadful state of affairs the high and absolute necessity of convening a Congress.

Before he had finished his report, however, the plan outlined had become untenable. "Since writing the above," he added in a postscript,

Genl Rusk has recd a letter from Genl Greene stating his determination not to obey any orders issued by virtue of my authority denying the validity and constitutionality of my appointment. Genl Rusk says he will *now* stand by me in defense of the Civil authority; he sees his own power departing as well as mine; the whole has been produced by his desire for promotion, and finding that his new allies are not aiming at his support but at their own aggrandizement, he is willing to cooperate with me; but I fear that nothing that he can now do will be of any service in the cause of restoring that authority which his previous conduct has prostrated.<sup>30</sup>

Realizing the hopelessness of securing control of the army with Green and Huston intriguing against him, Lamar withdrew. The failure of the Mexicans to make the threatened invasion caused the army to become reduced shortly after, and apparently no ill results followed the mutiny. That the opposition of the army was not due to any unpopularity of Lamar is evident, for in spite of this seeming reverse he continued to hold the esteem of the people for a number of years, receiving in succession election to the Vice-Presidency and the Presidency.

On July 23, 1836, President Burnet issued a proclamation call-

<sup>30</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 414.

ing for the election of a President, Vice-President, and Congress. At the same time the voters were to vote on the ratification of the Constitution which had been adopted by the Convention in March, and to decide upon the question of annexation to the United States. The election resulted in the choice of Houston as President and Lamar as Vice-President. The Constitution was adopted, and the vote for annexation, if it could be obtained, was almost unanimous. There was only a nominal opposition to Lamar, and his majority over all opponents was 2,699.<sup>31</sup>

The Constitution provided for the installation of the new government on the second Monday in December. The new Congress had assembled on the fourth of October, however, and there was considerable agitation in Congress for the installation of the President and Vice-President at an earlier period than that provided by the Constitution. Consequently, on October 22, Burnet announced his readiness to retire, and as Vice-President de Zavala had resigned the preceding day, the Constitutional President and Vice-President were inaugurated. Lamar confided to his diary the current impression that Burnet had been forced out by Houston's activity, and foreshadowed his own failure to get along harmoniously with Houston. He wrote:

Houston was so anxious to enter upon the duties of his office, that Burnet was forced by the threats of members of Congress that if he did not retire for the new President he would be pushed out. The Constitutional period for the installation of the President had not arrived as yet by a month. Houston could not wait. Burnet was forced to retire. Austin advised him to do it for the sake of peace; and insinuated that if he did not Congress would probably push him out. This was the first act of the government, a palpable violation of the Constitution. That little month Houston could not wait; nor could the hungry expectants brook the delay who were looking forward to presidential favors.<sup>32</sup>

Lamar delivered his inaugural address to both houses of Congress on October 22, and on the 24th he addressed the Senate on taking his seat as presiding officer. He stated that he was entirely lacking in knowledge of parliamentary procedure, but promised to be impartial. He said that he could not be expected to exercise any influence over legislation, but he wished to call their

<sup>31</sup>Brown, *History of Texas*, II, 99.

<sup>32</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 521.

attention to two evils, defamation of the character of opponents, and "Party." By party he did not mean taking sides on any measure, but organizations for advancing the interests of some favorite, thus recalling his own experience with party organization in his race for Congress in 1833.<sup>33</sup>

As presiding officer in the Senate Lamar's duties were not onerous, and for several months after his inauguration he busied himself collecting material for a history of Texas. The adjournment of Congress on December 21, had given him all the time needed for this, and he traveled over the Republic collecting material from original settlers.<sup>34</sup>

In May, 1837, Lamar returned to Georgia for a visit. He was received with honor everywhere. Many public dinners were given him, and he found all the opportunities he desired for making public addresses. He had hardly arrived in Georgia, however, before his friends in Texas began importuning him to return. Richard R. Royall wrote him on May 7, urging him to return to Texas to look after his presidential prospects.<sup>35</sup> Complaints were made of Houston's incompetency, his excesses in drinking and gambling, and his evident wish to retire. Finally, the Senate, September 30, 1837, passed in secret session a resolution "requesting and enjoining" him to return in view of Houston's illness and a threatened invasion by the Mexicans.<sup>36</sup> He returned in the latter part of October and resumed his seat as presiding officer of the Senate on November 8, when he delivered his customary address.

It seems that almost from the beginning Lamar was looked upon as the logical successor to Houston in the presidency. The letters I have referred to all spoke of the necessity for Lamar's return in order to look after his presidential prospects. The first formal move toward putting his name before the people was on December 1, 1837, when eleven out of the fourteen members of the Senate sent him a letter asking him to accept the nomination. They wrote:

<sup>33</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 469.

<sup>34</sup>Among his collected papers for this period are *Reminiscences of Henry Smith, 1788-1836*; *Reminiscences of Richard R. Royall, 1835-1836*; *Miscellaneous Notes on the history of Austin and Texas*; *Peter W. Grayson's visit to Mexico to release Austin*.

<sup>35</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 550.

<sup>36</sup>*Lamar Papers*, Nos. 554, 558, 598, 601.



In our anxiety to select the most suitable person to fill the office of President of this Republic, at the expiration of the term of General Sam Houston, we are satisfied from a knowledge of your character civil and military that you would be his most appropriate successor.

We respectfully request that you would inform us if you will permit your name to be used as a candidate for that high office. In making this request we are confident and happy in the belief that we express the wishes of a large majority of our fellow citizens.<sup>37</sup>

Before responding to this letter, Lamar, on December 7, wrote a note to T. J. Rusk, who had also been mentioned as a candidate for the presidency, asking Rusk's intentions with regard to the office, and expressing his intention to decline the nomination should Rusk desire to run. The action of both of these men under these circumstances is so unusual that I feel constrained to quote it in full. Lamar wrote:

I have just received a letter from several distinguished gentlemen, our mutual friends inviting me [to] become a candidate for the next Presidency. As you have been spoken of frequently for the same high office I am anxious to see you before I give a final answer. It is important that harmony at all times should be preserved in our country and at the present period any violent contest for the Chief Magistracy could not fail to be extremely prejudicial to the peace and prosperity of the country, but might prove fatal to its best hopes. I know that you as well as myself must deprecate these consequences, and with a view to avoid them, I think it all important that we should have a free and unreserved conference and by comparing our views come to some conclusion which whilst it may be satisfactory to ourselves will be most conducive to public interest. I shall be at my room at about 2 o'clock, when I hope it will be convenient for you to call upon me.

To this letter Rusk responded on the same day as follows:

Your note of this morning has been received informing me of a request having been made by several distinguished gentlemen to you to become a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic at the next election and desiring a free and unreserved conference between us on that subject before you answer their communication. I fully subscribe to the propriety of the course you suggest and

<sup>37</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 623. The Senators signing this were S. H. Everitt, J. S. Lester, I. W. Burton, Wm. H. Wharton, E. Raines, A. C. Horton, John Dunn, S. C. Robertson, D. Rowlett, G. W. Barnett, and Edward T. Branch.

am proud to say that it gives me another proof in addition to the many I have already had of your patriotism and desire to promote the harmony and good of the country. From a press of business it will not be in my power to call at your room at 2 o'clock this evening but I hope you will not on my account have any hesitancy in giving your consent to the request alluded to as there is no design or desire on my part to have my name before the people for any office whatever. As the representative of my country I feel bound to discharge to the best of my abilities the duties of the Station; but beyond this my private affairs and domestic obligations so long neglected imperiously demand my attention and will not permit me to think of public life beyond the discharge of those military obligations in the hour of danger which I hold paramount to all other considerations. But I shall be pleased, dear sir, to see your name before the people for the office of Chief Magistrate and shall be happy to sustain you in your labors for the welfare of the country to which we are both under many obligations for *confidence reposed and honors conferred*.

After the receipt of this letter, Lamar replied to the Senators accepting their suggestion that he stand for the presidency. He expressed his gratitude that the request came from those over whom he had presided in the Senate. "I can only say in answer," he said, "that I came to this country for the sole purpose of subserving the great objects of the revolution. Until those objects are fully achieved, I do not feel myself at liberty to decline the duties of any station, however high or humble to which the voice of my fellow citizens may call me."<sup>38</sup>

The nomination of Lamar by the Senate was followed by public meetings which nominated him throughout the Republic. The first of these was at Richmond, his home town, on April 17, 1838, when he and Burnet were nominated. On April 21, a meeting at Columbia took similar action. On April 23, a large public meeting in Galveston nominated Lamar. A large gathering met in the Hall of the House of Representatives in Houston on May 19, and after much oratory adopted resolutions favoring the election of Lamar to the presidency. These nominations were all from west of the Trinity. On May 10 a public meeting at San Augustine, in the extreme east, nominated Lamar and Joseph Rowe.<sup>39</sup> The opposition was represented by the candidacy of Peter W. Grayson, who had been Attorney-General in Burnet's cabinet and

<sup>38</sup>Lamar Papers, No. 631; *Telegraph and Texas Register*, June 2, 1838.

<sup>39</sup>*Telegraph and Texas Register*, April 25, May 2, June 2, 1838.

later commissioner to the United States; James Collingsworth, the first chief-justice of the Supreme Court, and Robert Wilson.

The campaign abounded in personalities. Lamar was accused of getting more than his legal share of public land,<sup>40</sup> which was denied by his friends. He was accused of being ineligible for the presidency, not having been a citizen for three years. In reply to this, he brought out affidavits from men showing that he had made a public address at Washington in the summer of 1835 in which he announced his purpose of becoming a citizen of Texas. He stated, also, that it was strange that after the public service he had performed the question of his eligibility should come up.<sup>41</sup> The *Galveston Civilian*, which was especially bitter against Lamar, claimed that he was afflicted with partial insanity. To this the *Telegraph and Texas Register* replied that "we sincerely regret that his disorder is not contagious, in order that the country might reap some benefit from it even before election."<sup>42</sup> An effort was made to turn the election along sectional lines, and Lamar, the candidate of the West, was constantly urged by his friends in the East to concentrate his campaign in that section.

The election was to be held on September 3. Before that time both of Lamar's principal opponents had committed suicide, Grayson by shooting himself at Bean's Station, Tennessee, and Collingsworth by drowning in Galveston Bay. It seems evident that Lamar would have been elected by an overwhelming majority had his opponents lived and continued in the race. There was some effort made to turn all the opposition to Collingsworth after the death of Grayson on July 9, but with little success. The death of Collingsworth shortly after that of Grayson made any opposition hopeless. Wilson had never been considered seriously in the race, and the election resulted in his receiving only 252 votes, while Lamar received 6,995.<sup>43</sup> The only real contest was for Vice-President, and D. G. Burnet, on the Lamar ticket, was elected by a majority of 776 votes over the combined votes of A. C. Horton and Joseph Rowe.

(Continued.)

<sup>40</sup>Quoted from the *Galveston Civilian*, in *Telegraph and Texas Register*, August 4, 1838.

<sup>41</sup>*Lamar Papers*, No. 746; *Telegraph and Texas Register*, June 30, 1838.

<sup>42</sup>*Telegraph and Texas Register*, June 30, 1838.

<sup>43</sup>Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, 300; Baneroft, *North Mexican States and Texas*, II, 313; Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 245.